



Displaced Children & Orphans Fund

A Program of the U.S. Agency for International Development

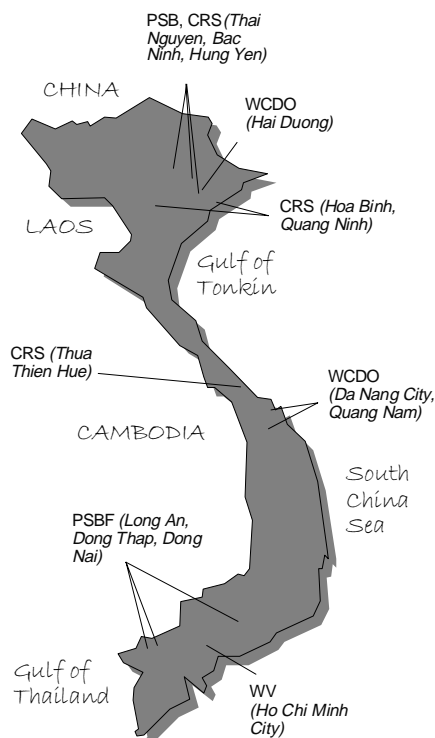
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Vietnam

Vietnam has experienced rapid economic and technological reforms as the country moves from a central to a market-oriented economy. Industrialization and urbanization have increased urban migration as farm opportunities diminish. As a result, the already-precarious situation of Vietnam's children has worsened. Children are turning to the streets to care for themselves and their families, and more than 3.2 million children have dropped out of primary and secondary school. The Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (GSRV) is struggling to meet the social, psychological, and economic needs of these children, but to date, its response has been inadequate, focused almost exclusively on institutionalization.

Nevertheless, as the first country in Asia and the second in the world to ratify the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)*, Vietnam has demonstrated a strong commitment to child survival, protection, and development. In 1991, the GSRV established the Vietnam Committee for the Protection and Care of Children (CPCC) to oversee the implementation of the newly formed *Law on the Protection, Care and Education of Children*. This committee was also tasked to be the national focal point for managing cooperation with the local and international community on questions regarding policies on and services for *Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances (CEDC)* and their families. United Nations estimates released in 1997 note that over three million children in Vietnam are

characterized as CEDC. This three million includes disadvantaged ethnic minority children, street children, working children, and disabled children.

In 1992, USAID assistance in Vietnam was expanded to include humanitarian support to CEDC under the Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF). Like its sister fund, the Patrick J. Leahy War Victims Fund, the DCOF carries "notwithstanding" authority that allows USAID to support humanitarian assistance activities in Vietnam despite continuing legislative negotiations and prohibitions. Early USAID grants to U.S. Private Voluntary Organizations supported programs targeting the development of drop-in education centers for children on the street, an increase in vocational training opportunities for at-risk adolescents, and the provision of primary education for ethnic minority children.

In 1997, USAID launched a new "children with disabilities" initiative to address the visible gap in noninstitutional services for children with special needs. Under this initiative, USAID awarded grants to four organizations—Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Pearl S. Buck Foundation (PSBF), World Concern Development Organization (WCDO), and World Vision (WV). To date, USAID has provided approximately \$9 million in Vietnam under the DCOF program and has committed an additional \$3 million through the year 2000 under the disabled children's initiative.

Accomplishments

Over 7,000 children receiving direct services, over 1,000 ethnic minority children targeted, over 50,000 persons indirectly benefited



Over 1,000 children de-institutionalized and placed with birth or foster families



U.S. and international standard social work and child care training provided for over 1,400 personnel



Vietnam's foster family program designed and developed



Ministry policy from institutional-based care to community-based care passed with DCOF assistance



Newsletter produced by

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Catholic Relief Services

The vast majority of children with disabilities in Vietnam have no access to schooling. Instead, they are often cared for by their families, viewed as burdens, and hidden inside the home or institutionally abandoned and cared for by the state.

After becoming a signatory of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Vietnam adjusted its national education policy per convention Articles 23 and 28, which state that disabled children have a right to a full and decent life, and that "every child has a fundamental right to education," respectively. However, prohibitive costs, lack of appropriate social skills, continued discrimination, and fear were obstacles that continued to impede disabled children's equal opportunity for education and social integration.

In 1995, CRS, in partnership with the National Institute for Educational Sciences (NIES), Center for Special Education (CSE), began demonstrating models of inclusive education and community support in two northern districts outside of Hanoi. In addition to showing social and academic gains, these models illustrated that mainstreaming disabled children provided a cost savings of nearly 86 percent: \$58 per annum versus \$400 in institutional-based settings.

USAID has provided a three-year grant to CRS amounting to \$729,753 to expand this inclusive education program to three additional provinces (to be selected from the six provinces identified on the map on page 1; provide direct training to 270 pre-, primary-, and intermediate-school-level teachers and indirect training through curriculum enhancement to 600 graduates of three national teacher training colleges; and establish district- and community-level support systems.

Pearl S. Buck Foundation

Despite the great strides Vietnam has made in providing social development services to its population, large gaps still exist both in assistance and among disenfranchised groups. One such group is the under-16-year-old deaf and hearing impaired. Of the estimated 188,000 non-voluntary members of this group, less than 2,500 are enrolled in or attend the 57 mostly segregated and urban-based schools for the deaf and hearing impaired. This figure represents less than 2 percent of the number of hearing impaired and deaf students who are eligible for and seek education.

USAID has provided a three-year grant to PSBF amounting to \$1,179,395 to address the inequities disabled children face in the educational system. The PSBF approach will be three-pronged: (1) provide direct service intervention to over 10,000 children; (2) conduct standardized training for 280 kindergarten and elementary school teachers as well as preparing a cadre of audiological, speech, and language specialists; and (3) mobilize the existing educational infrastructure to deliver deaf education and related services through curriculum development for both educators and communities at large. In addition, the PSBF grant will provide resources to record, elaborate, and promote an internationally acceptable, indigenous Vietnamese sign language manual and training program.

The PSBF program will target six provinces: Bac Ninh, Thai Nguyen, and Hung Yen in the North, and Dong Thap, Long An, and Dong Nai in the South.

Health and Education Volunteers

From 1994 to 1996, USAID worked with Health and Education Volunteers (HEV) under the DCOF project to address the needs of displaced children and Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances in Lam Dong province in the central highlands of Vietnam. In 1997, this partnership was expanded geographically to include Can Tho province in the South and Hung Yen in the North. This expansion included income-generation activities for at-risk families and scholarships for children out of school.

Since their inception, these programs have provided over 700 children with basic education, income generation, and daily living assistance; reunited over 200 children with their birth or extended families; and contributed substantially to keeping at-risk families together by providing alternative means of income and support.

To date, USAID has provided \$830,000 to the HEV program.

World Vision

A 1986 Ministry of Health survey noted that Vietnam's predominately urban-based rehabilitation facilities were serving only 1 to 5 percent of the disabled population.

As a result, community-based rehabilitation (CBR) was introduced to address and meet the rehabilitation needs of the disabled within their own communities. To date, over 500,000 disabled children have been served by CBR in 45 provinces.

In 1992, USAID provided assistance to World Vision under the DCOF through a grant totalling \$2,856,195. Under this grant, World Vision began providing social services to the Number 8 Port District, the most densely populated and poorest district in Ho Chi Minh City. In District 8, over 42 percent of families have no access to latrines, 46

percent of children are not registered in school, and nearly 20 percent of families have at least one member with a disability (1995 statistics).

To address the unmet rehabilitation needs of children in District 8, USAID has again provided World Vision with a three-year grant amounting to \$712,515 to establish a CBR system. The project will assist children with disabilities in functioning more independently in their homes and communities through the use of appropriate rehabilitative interventions.

Over the life of the grant, more than 160 professionals will receive the knowledge and skills necessary to provide effective CBR services to children, and more than 3,500 direct and indirect beneficiaries will be targeted.

World Vision's disabled children's program is strongly linked with its rehabilitation interventions and assistance in the central and northern regions of Vietnam, funded in part by USAID's Leahy War Victims Fund.

World Concern Development Organization

The DCOF has supported innovative and successful WCDO educational and vocational training programs for displaced adolescents and ethnic minority children—particularly Montagnards—since 1992.

Under this project, over 900 adolescents have completed vocational training programs and 80 percent have successfully found and maintained employment. Additionally, over 575 ethnic minority children have been given ongoing educational opportunities, and a cadre of 40 ethnic minority adults were the first to complete an accelerated teacher training program and return to manage classrooms in their communities.

Under the disabled children's initiative, USAID has provided WCDO with a three-year grant amounting to \$875,344 for an adaptive vocational training program for adolescents with disabilities (AWD). The program is designed to provide AWD with the skills and abilities to meet their own social, vocational, and economic needs.

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Off the street and into school, a DCOF-supported project in Da Nang

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The program is multifaceted and will (1) develop an awareness of and responsiveness to disability issues, (2) develop adaptive vocational training programs, (3) increase access to employment and income-generation programs, and (4) facilitate the formation of a supportive social network managed by AWD.

The project will begin in two provinces—Hai Duong in the North and Quang Nam in the central region—and will be replicated in one additional location in Da Nang City in the third year.



A school lunch program in southern Vietnam

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